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90th plenary meeting
Thursday, 5 June 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(h) Appointment of a member of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/68/898)

The President: As indicated in document A/68/898, as a result of the expiration on 31 December 2014 of the term of office of Mr. Tadanori Inomata (Japan), the General Assembly is required, during its current session, to appoint a person to serve as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a full term of office beginning on 1 January 2015 and expiring on 31 December 2019.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted with the regional group concerned, I have requested that Jordan propose a candidate to replace Mr. Inomata.

I would like to remind Members that, in accordance with resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As also indicated in document A/68/898, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Rajab Sukayri (Jordan) for appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning 1 January 2015 and expiring on 31 December 2019.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint the candidate?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 116.

Agenda item 34

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/868)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.47)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.47.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506. Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Today I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", contained in document A/68/L.47, under agenda item 34, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", and to seek the Assembly's support for it. In fact, I seek its support for a principle — a principle of morality and international law; for a humanitarian cause; and in order to once again affirm that it is unacceptable to use force to change demography, redraw borders or deny a population its right to return.

Today's draft resolution is designed to reaffirm the inalienable right of all forcibly displaced persons of all ethnicities and religious beliefs evicted from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, to return to their places of origin in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner, and for their property rights to be respected, in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, ethnic Georgians, Abkhaz, Greeks, Estonians and Ossetians — Christian, Jewish and Muslim — are still denied access to their homes as a result of waves of displacement. We should respond to their hopes and expectations. We should support their dream of a day when they can return to their homes to heal their wounds and restore their broken neighbourhoods. We should attempt to vindicate their sincere belief that resolute calls from the international community will bear fruit.

In the report before us, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscores that

> "[i]t is essential to recognize return as both a human right and a humanitarian issue that must be addressed irrespective of any solution to an underlying conflict" (*A/68/868, para. 45*).

We thank the Secretary-General for that reminder. When introducing this draft resolution every year, we leave politics aside and focus exclusively on the humanitarian dimension of the problem. Its primary focus on human rights is a deliberate choice in order to avoid political speculation when the fundamental rights of the displaced are at stake. Given the scale of displacement and the amount of time that has passed, the importance of arriving at a final response to address the needs of the displaced is more urgent than ever.

The draft resolution and the report of the Secretary-General serve as the reference points for the Geneva international discussions, which remain the only platform between Georgia and Russia pursuant to the six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 for addressing the security and humanitarian issues, with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union present. The draft text, which was first adopted in May 2008 (resolution 62/249), months before the Geneva discussions were established, reinvigorates and reinforces the Geneva format and complements the work on humanitarian issues. It encourages the participants in the Geneva talks to redouble their efforts to ensure respect for human rights and create favourable conditions for people's safe, voluntary and dignified return. It further confirms one of the main principles, as underlined in the statement just quoted from the Secretary-General's report, that the political dimension of the Geneva discussions should not hijack the fundamental human rights of those concerned.

The draft resolution before us, therefore, is not a political tool aimed at obstructing the ongoing negotiations, as one delegation has repeatedly and misleadingly suggested. On the contrary, it forms a basis for respect for the human rights of all those uprooted from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. Regrettably, the establishment of a comprehensive timetable remains unresolved. To that end, the Secretary-General calls on those involved in the Geneva discussions to engage constructively on the issue, building on international law and the relevant principles. My Government is committed to those talks and to the principle of the non-use of force. My country has made that pledge unilaterally and reiterated it on numerous occasions at the highest level. We still expect the Russian Federation to reciprocate it.

The Government of Georgia continues its efforts to remedy the plight of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, without prejudice to their right to return. The implementation of the State strategy on internally displaced persons and its updated action plan, as well as the new law on internally displaced persons from the occupied territories of Georgia, have brought about significant improvements with regard to the issues of providing appropriate living conditions to the IDPs, financial assistance, proper registration, procedures for the timely granting of IDP status to every affected person, family reunions, ensuring the right of property

restitution, the provision of appropriate health care, education and employment in a non-discriminatory manner and so on.

Let me briefly update Members on the current situation on the ground. The continuing installation of barbed-wire fences and the expansion of the zone of occupation have caused further displacement, cutting off entire villages and dividing families living in the adjacent areas. It is particularly alarming that some representatives of the authorities in control in the occupied regions, most recently in Abkhazia, have periodically called for further discriminatory measures against ethnic Georgians.

The gravity of the situation was also witnessed and highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, who travelled to Georgia last month. She made a clear reference to the absence of any internationally mandated monitoring mechanism and the almost complete isolation of those regions. Referring particularly to the Tskhinvali region as

> "one of the most inaccessible places on Earth, with no access permitted for international agencies, except the International Committee of the Red Cross".

Ms. Pillay underlined the devastating consequences of the so-called borderization activities along the administrative boundary lines,

> "further impeding the right to freedom of movement for IDPs and the enjoyment of rights to property, water, health, education and access to religious and cultural sites".

It is totally unacceptable that Ms. Pillay and Mr. Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, were repeatedly denied access to the occupied regions, contrary to the spirit of the draft resolution, which calls for unimpeded access for humanitarian activities.

Let me conclude my remarks with something that we have said before. Each and every one of those hundreds of thousands of people carries a dream in their hearts — the dream of returning to the soil that nurtured generations of their ancestors and of sharing it with their children.

This year, the issue of security in the GUAM area and the problem of forcible displacement worldwide have topped the international agenda. In that light, I believe that today, the General Assembly will be even more united, principled and decisive in its support in affirming the fundamental principles enshrined in the draft resolution. I hope that Members will add their voice to strengthen this humanitarian cause and vote in favour of the draft resolution and in support of international law, the moral principles of humanity and, ultimately, the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): As the representative of the Republic of Moldova, I speak also on behalf of Georgia, Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan — the countries of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM. This is the seventh consecutive year that action is to be taken on the draft resolution before us (A/68/L.47) since its introduction to the General Assembly. It is regrettable that many security, human rights and humanitarian challenges in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia still remain unresolved.

The States members of GUAM are convinced that the humanitarian concerns of the affected population, including internally displaced persons, continue to be a priority and that the issue must be addressed as soon as possible. We are disappointed that no substantial progress has been made in the areas of security, human rights or the humanitarian field concerning the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Moreover, since the adoption of resolution 67/109, the situation has further deteriorated, creating additional impediments to the rights of internally displaced persons.

The matters of our particular concern remain the continuing fencing activity along the administrative boundary lines, as well as the continuing detentions and occurrence of constant illegal and artificial impediments to the freedom of movement, such as denying the population access to their homes and farmlands, the possibility of timely medical evacuation and adequate access to schools. In that context, GUAM views positively Georgia's strategy for engagement through cooperation, which aims to build trust and confidence among the divided communities.

We, the States members of GUAM, reiterate our well-established position that the way to resolve the long-standing issues is through a negotiated and mutually agreed approach on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We

believe that the Geneva discussions are a important forum for strengthening stability in Georgia and for making progress on the security, humanitarian and other remaining challenges, as the Secretary-General himself puts it in his most recent report A/68/868 of May 2014. Draft resolution A/68/L.47 calls for the intensification of the current talks in order to create the conditions for the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin. We appreciate the role of the annual reporting by the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, as it is a useful tool for maintaining the international community's greatly needed involvement in and attention to the issue of the internally displaced persons. Only addressing it in an urgent manner, including by the General Assembly, will contribute to its solution.

The States members of GUAM stress their call for unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to the displaced population and those living in Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We regret the absence of any internationally mandated monitoring mechanism in those areas. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, made efforts during her visit to Georgia to visit Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as my colleague has said. Once again her access was denied, thereby preventing any monitoring of respect for basic human rights there. She expressed her concern about the isolation and fencing of South Ossetia, in particular, which further impedes the right to freedom of movement for IDPs and the enjoyment of rights to property, water, health, education and access to religious and cultural sites. In recent weeks, two more villages have been cut off from South Ossetia by the expanding barrier, according to her report.

The draft resolution before us forms the fundamental basis for restoring the human rights of all those evicted from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and aims to encourage the participants in the Geneva talks to renew their efforts to create the necessary conditions for people's voluntary, safe and dignified return. Freedom of movement, property and access to basic services are basic rights that do not impede or interfere with political processes, but rather support a resolution process based on respect for the rights of all parties involved.

Taking into account such principles and keeping in mind that the main goal of the draft resolution is respect for the right of the safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, the States members of GUAM consider the draft resolution to be humanitarian in nature and will vote in favour of it. Our decision arises from our strong and long-standing commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles, including the right to return, property rights and humanitarian access.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada): Canada plays an active role in promoting the rights and well-being of refugees and internally displaced peoples, and we are committed to continuing to work with the international community to address both long-standing and emerging protection challenges. Displacement is not only a humanitarian concern; it is also a key human rights and development issue. Identifying and implementing durable solutions to protracted situations of displacement must remain a high priority for all of us. Furthermore, all returns of displaced persons must be guided by humanitarian principles and be safe, dignified, informed and voluntary.

(*spoke in French*)

The guiding principles with regard to the displacement of persons within their own countries, which form the key international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), establishes an essential structure for monitoring and defending the interests of such people in order to meet their needs for assistance and protection. Canada adheres to the wording of the draft resolution in favour of unimpeded access for humanitarian workers to IDPs and refugees in all regions of Georgia affected by conflict (A/68/L.47). Furthermore, we support the appeals asking for all the participants in the Geneva discussions to step up their efforts to establish lasting peace, to commit to adopting the best possible methods for building confidence and to establish favourable security conditions for the voluntary, safe and unimpeded return of IDPs and refugees to their countries.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada continues to support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We denounce the Russian Federation's continued installation of fences and other physical barriers along the administrative lines of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Canada also strongly condemns Russia's aggression in

Crimea and eastern regions of Ukraine. Those latest violations of a sovereign nation's territorial integrity only further demonstrate Russia's disregard for international rule of law.

Canada is a strong supporter of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We will continue to work with other like-minded countries and the international organizations to ensure that those around the world who have been forcibly displaced are able to exercise those fundamental rights.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): While we align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Moldova on behalf of the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Group, I would like to make several comments in my national capacity.

It is beyond any doubt that the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which we are considering here today, deserves our utmost attention, as internal displacement in the world is growing rapidly, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As a principal policymaking body of the United Nations, the General Assembly should be actively engaged in tackling the problem of internal displacement, both by preventing situations that might lead to internal displacement and by dealing effectively with operative factors that have already led to displacement.

It has been seven years since the General Assembly first took up the consideration of the draft resolution before us today (A/68/L.47). While noting with satisfaction that the efforts of the international discussions in Geneva and the humanitarian engagement of a variety of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and other actors, have contributed to some improvements in the security and humanitarian situation on the ground, we regret to acknowledge that security, humanitarian, human rights and development challenges remain unresolved.

Regretfully, I have to acknowledge that the issue of internal displacement has become relevant to my country, Ukraine. The temporary occupation of Crimea by Russia has resulted in the internal displacement of more than 10,000 civilians; that number continues to rise. The Government of Ukraine is taking all the measures needed to address the humanitarian needs of that new category of population in Ukraine, most of whom were forced to leave their homes due to the Russian Federation occupation of Crimea and its current destabilization activity in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the number of IDPs in Georgia is even higher, and their needs require the serious attention of the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and express our support for the draft resolution, the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We call on all Member States that have not yet done so to reconsider their position and voice their support for that important document.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic States: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and my own country, Estonia.

This is the seventh consecutive year that action is taken on the draft resolution before us (A/68/L.47) since it was first introduced in the General Assembly (resolution 62/153). Unfortunately, no substantial progress has been made so far in the areas of security or human rights, or in the humanitarian field, with respect to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia, Georgia. On the contrary, during the last year, the situation has deteriorated, creating additional impediments to the rights of the IDPs.

We note with profound concern the threats and increasing activities by foreign security forces to erect fences and other obstacles along administrative boundary lines in Georgia, between the territory administered by the Government in Tbilisi and the region of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Such activities, which contravene Georgia's territorial integrity, create significant hardship for residents on either side of the administrative boundary lines and serious challenges stability and security in those regions.

The draft resolution introduced today is humanitarian in nature. Our decision to support and vote in favour of it stems from our strong and long-lasting commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles, including the right to return, property rights and humanitarian access. We believe that the issue of IDPs requires continuing international attention, and only addressing it in an urgent manner would contribute to the solution

of the conflict. Continued international attention can have a significant impact on preventing similar threats in the future in other nearby regions.

Ahead of the upcoming international discussions scheduled to take place in Geneva on 17 and 18 June, we wish to call upon all the participants in the discussions to work together towards sustainable security and the humanitarian situation-related arrangements. We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/68/L.47.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Yet again, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees in the Caucasus. Sadly, as in previous years, its sponsors are by no means guided by their stated noble humanitarian goals. This initiative continues to be politically motivated and shortsighted in its thrust. As in previous years, it does not take into account the political and legal realities in the region — specifically, the existence of two independent States, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

It is indicative that, for a number of years already, the text of the draft resolution has been regurgitated, unaltered in its substance, save for a few minimal technical updates. Such a mechanical approach hardly reflects a genuine concern for the plight of the thousands of people who have had to abandon their homes as a result of Tbilisi's reckless policy. What we have is a clear attempt by Georgia to again draw attention away from the fundamental problems of internally displaced persons and refugees, the main reason for which can be attributed to the irresponsible actions of the Georgian authorities leading up to the armed attack on Tskhinvali in August 2008.

In practice, the Georgian delegation's regular submission of the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons for consideration by the United Nations hampers the discussion of that issue in the second working group of the Geneva discussions. Tskhinvali and Sukhumi have repeatedly warned that this would be the case if the Georgian side persued its policy of discussing this issue at the General Assembly without the participation of representatives from Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Sadly, those arguments were not taken on board by the draft resolution's sponsors.

Georgia is thereby not only blocking an objective discussion of important humanitarian issues, but is also greatly hampering the entire process of the Geneva discussions and hindering the search for mutually acceptable solutions on issues of security and humanitarian problems in the region. We have no doubt that the Georgian initiative is counterproductive and likely to further stall the complex talks taking place in Geneva, which have been an extremely important format for dialogue between the representatives of Abkazia, South Ossetia and Georgia.

In his report (A/68/868), the Secretary-General notes that the Geneva discussions provide an opportunity for constructive interaction and are a single forum in which the key stakeholders can discuss security, stability and humanitarian issues, in particular in relation to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The repeated year-in, year-out calls on all participants in the Geneva discussions to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace and to commit to enhanced confidence-building measures seem rather clumsy in the light of the stubborn reluctance of Tbilisi to conclude, with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, binding arrangements on the non-use of force.

In view of all of this, the Russian Federation calls for a recorded vote on draft resolution A/68/L.47 and will vote against it. We trust that other Member States will also oppose this politicized initiative, which, in practice, does nothing to help resolve the humanitarian problems in the region.

Mr. Suazo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to make a statement in explanation of vote before the votin on draft resolution A/68/L.47, on the Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Honduras believes that the draft resolution refers to the inalienable rights of refugees to return to their homes and their lands and to enjoy access to their places of origin. In our view, that is a fundamental, internationally recognized and inalienable right.

Furthermore, the draft resolution is based on the principles of international humanitarian law and the norms and principles of international conventions and agreements on the human rights of refugees.

We believe that the draft resolution is apolitical in nature, as it deals with the specific situation of thousands of individuals who have been directly affected by a conflict, and that its text is purely humanitarian in scope. It also highlights the case of some 500,000 internally displaced persons and refugees of various ethnicities. Finally, my delegation believes that the draft resolution is also in line with the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/868) and with the process of verification and monitoring of the situation on the ground. This is the sole and most appropriate mechanism we have to truly monitor the situation. For those reasons, my delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.47.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Against:

Armenia, Belarus, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia

Draft resolution A/68/L.47 was adopted by 69 votes to 13, with 79 abstentions (resolution 68/274).

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain; the delegation of Zimbabwe informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): Brazil supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and does not recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We acknowledge the difficulties arising from the high number of internally displaced persons and refugees and from the humanitarian pressures since the conflict with Russia in 2008.

We have once again abstained in the voting on the resolution, since we believe that it could prejudge issues that are subject to the Geneva process. We are concerned that the resolution could interfere with the negotiations in Geneva. Overcoming the challenges faced by internally displaced persons and refugees depends mainly on the creation of favourable political conditions for their return and the absence of fear of a resumption of conflict.

Brazil urges the parties to make efforts to identify lasting solutions to the situation of Georgian internally displaced persons and refugees, keeping in mind their right of return in particular. The Brazilian Government hopes that the dispute between Georgia and Russia can be resolved through dialogue in as short a time as

possible. We believe that confidence-building measures and cooperation are essential, and hope that every effort will be made to seek improved understanding between the parties, including in the framework of the Geneva process.

Mr. Minah (Sierra Leone): The consistency of Sierra Leone's votes on this issue reflects our unshakeable commitment to the principles that underlie resolution 68/274, just adoped. It also signals our affirmation of the rights of internally displaced persons and our support for those who are trying to resolve their plight. When called on to do so, we feel it is our place to support a system based on rules, rights and principles, as the international system is, and we, as a country that has been a beneficiary of that system, feel we should stand up and be counted.

Internally displaced persons may deserve our sympathy, and may get it; they may deserve our empathy, and may get it; but at times they need us to give our active and public support to their plight. We stand with all those who seek to resolve what they are going through, because we believe the concept of displacement is not only physical but psychological. We will remain by Georgia's side, and when called on will continue to express our support for the rights of the internally displaced.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I would like to briefly explain our position. At the outset, I would like to reaffirm Turkey's commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. In that regard, we are concerned that the conflicts in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia remain unresolved. The situation has serious economic, social and humanitarian consequences, primarily for the people of Georgia but also for the peoples of the Caucasus region as a whole.

Turkey supports all efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution of these conflicts. We invite all parties to work towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace that also provides for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. As a country of the region and a neighbour of Georgia, we stand ready to contribute to all efforts to that end. We support the Geneva talks, which provide a valuable forum for finding practical solutions to the challenges faced by all parties and also address the issue of the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return for IDPs and refugees. We call on all sides to engage seriously with one another in a cooperative manner in order to build confidence and move on to achieving tangible results.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is a country that has been significantly involved, at the national and international level, in promoting, protecting and defending human rights and international humanitarian law. Commitment to international law and the principles of peaceful coexistence and territorial integrity has been a priority of our foreign policy. We believe it essential that all parties involved in these kinds of situations maintain, enhance and respect, impartially and consistently, the standards of international humanitarian law that constitute the foundation of the protection of civilians.

Uruguay considers it vital that the Geneva talks continue in order to reach a solution to the issues of security, stability and the humanitarian situation of the internally displaced persons and refugees in the region. We trust that the discussions will result in a positive outcome for those affected and establish the necessary conditions for their voluntary return to their homes, while respecting their human rights without discrimination. We consider the talks to be a high priority and we encourage the parties to make every effort to ensure their success. My delegation therefore considered it appropriate to abstain from voting on resolution 68/274.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.